

Shortgrass Country
By Monte Noelke
7-30-70
Page 8

In case you didn't notice, Farm Safety Week started on the 19th of July. President Nixon, supported by the Governor of Texas, proclaimed that outlanders should use the period to prevent rural accidents.

What the two chieftains should have done was to declare a farm safety decade. The way herders tear up equipment and abuse stock, one week isn't long enough for either hair or rust to cover the damage of a single mishap.

For the past 29 weeks of this year, I've been trying to get the hands at the ranch to be more careful. They tear up saddles and cripple horses at a rate that would burn the bearings out of the biggest safety program in the country. Furthermore, it'd be impossible to estimate how many shovel handles and hammer handles they splinter in a year. And I wouldn't expect the Census Bureau to determine how many pounds of loss of livestock weight is lost from old boys dodging fighting cows or mad bulls. It isn't anything for them to stand around the outside of a corral and let a mad bovine run off 30 pounds of fat.

Farm safety should have been the theme the day the first cowboy stepped in a stirrup. From then on, one safety officer per hand should have been on the premises to keep the waddie from becoming so reckless with the capital outlay. A good safety man could have kept them from developing into a pack of self centered hombres who never thought of anything but their own welfare. You don't have to leave town to see my point proven. Next time you are at the stockyards, pause and watch the yard boys. Are they looking after themselves or the stock? It'll be the same old story in every incident. Where there's a question of whether a valuable cow or a costly employe is going to get hurt, the cow will get the wrong end of the deal.

Insurance companies claim an accident occurs in the United States every three seconds. Brought down to a business the size of ranching, that still means several hundred dollars are frequently lost by negligence. Modern ranchdom, as you well know, can stand to lose 15 cents about as easy as any of the nation's leading dishwashers can stand to lose a ten spot; we can't even afford to read about accident prone cases, much less bank a bunch of stumble-footed wranglers.

The President and the Governor ought to go on and push a farm safety bill through the state houses. Serious fines could be imposed upon cowhands who insist on allowing horses to buck, scaring cattle, scattering wildlife, and setting a bad example of young men. Such rangeland tomfoolery as falling off windmills, interrupting the work, could be forbidden in separate sections. By using their executive heads instead of their executive handshakes, farm safety could be made to work the year around.

Scorn my idea all you want to, but keep in mind that Wells Fargo Stage Lines went broke after their confounded horse skinnners got to worrying more about arrows and gunshots than the stagecoaches and the horses.